

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Winter Sesshin, Day 3, Lecture No. 3
WAY-SEEKING MIND, Part III
Monday, December 1, 1969
Tassajara

Our way-seeking mind is buddha-mind. And our practice is—makes sense when you practice with buddha-mind, or way-seeking mind. But usually, when we say the way-seeking mind or *dōshin*—*dōshin*—*dō* is *dao*, and *shin* is mind—it also means bodhi- [partial word]—bodhisattva-mind—bodhisattva-mind: to—not only to help ourselves but also to save or to help others. Strong nuance of this kind is always there when we say *dōshin*.

Right now we recited: "This perfect and penetrating dharma is rarely met with even [in a] hundred thousand *kalpas* of time." The moment we have right now doesn't come back again. I don't know how old are you, but if this day pass, you will not have the same day. So not only dharma you listen [to], but also your life you have right now doesn't come back. Even [in a] hundred thousand *kalpas* of time, you cannot repeat your life again. And it is so. So it is foolish to stick to something and ignore our life which does not come again. We should not be regretful after many years.

[Whispering off-mike.] No. You cannot hear? Excuse me.

That is why we make our effort, day by day, moment after moment.

This is the third day of *sesshin*. One-week *sesshin* is not so long. If you pass three days, the rest of days will be easier. But at the same time, you will miss the day of the difficulties you have had. I think that is the actual feeling you have now when you pass already three days.

When I am sitting with you like this, I feel as if I were only maybe 30 or 35 years old, but [laughs] I am already 55 [laughs, laughter]. It's—it is amazing. But I think I feel, you know, as you feel right now. If you feel you are quite young, that will be the mistake [laughs, laughter]. You know, 30 years or 60 years doesn't make any difference. So I think you should feel as I feel, and I should feel as you feel. And we should practice zazen. This is, you know, bodhisattva-mind: to help others and to help themselves.

Especially—you do not make much progress after 30 or 35, so while you are young, you must make best effort and try to have various experience as much as possible. And after 40 years—after the age of 40, you will develop your work on the foundation you built up before

you were 30. In this way, if it is so, your time is very valuable. You should make best effort so that you will not be regret the days you passed without making enough effort.

This kind of spirit is a spirit which you do not have. Not much people—not much American people understand this kind of spirit. You seek for something good always, and you choose easy way, and you depend on some teaching, and you are asking always which way you should take. But that is, you know, I think that is mistake. In that way, if you, you know—to choose something easy means you follow the preconceived idea. You follow—you choose something you can understand—something—you follow the experience [of] something you have had, without seeking for something new to you. If you, you know, always choose easy way, your way will be, you know—the—your life will be the life you will be regret. If you make every effort on each moment in various way as much as possible, you will not regret when you become old—when you become old.

So bodhisattva spirit is the spirit to seek for difficulties and—and to confront with difficulties. With firm conviction you should venture your life. When you—you have this kind of spirit, you will be quite different person. Your eyes will change. Your behavior will change. And there are many bodhisattvas—not only [in] Buddha time but also in China and in Japanese—in Japan too—many and many bodhisattvas who practiced bodhisattva's way.

Those who went to India, and seek for the scriptures, and translated it into China [from the Chinese], and those who [sailed] across the China Sea and studied Buddhism in China, or Chinese priest who came to Japan without being afraid of the stormy weather of Japan—China Sea. The most famous one will be Ganjin—Chinese priest Ganjin.¹ He tried seven—seven times to cross the ocean. And he lost his sight with his difficulties. And at last he came—he could come to visit Japan and built a temple. That is, you know, a bodhisattva-mind. With this kind of effort, our way was supported by many people because of the spirit, because of the feat of those great teachers.

Buddhist, you know, respect tradition, you may say, but there is some reason why we respect tradition. The ancient bodhisattva's way was always beyond our reach—almost, you know, beyond our reach. And they are always encouraging us, not only because they have done great things, but also they did not afraid of anything. They did not afraid of poverty, they did not afraid of death, or they did not afraid of failure. They found a joy in failure, in poverty, and [in] doing some small things with, you know—famous words in *Lotus Sūtra* is "to shine

¹ Ganjin: Japanese name for Chien-Chen (688-733), a Chinese Vinaya master who came to Japan at the invitation of the Japanese emperor. He founded the Ritsu school.

the one corner of the world." Just, you know, it is enough if you shine the one corner of the world—one corner of the room. That is enough [laughs].

That kind of spirit may be, you know, difficult to understand. But to, you know, if you sweep, you know, square room, you know, maybe you may sweep the, you know [laughs]—only, you know—you will not sweep the corner of the room [laughs]. If you wipe the floor or scrub the floor, you—you always leave the corners [laughs, laughter]. It is easy, and it may be fast. You may think it is better to scrub the corner of the room—it—you may think it is better to clean two rooms trying to, you know, clean the—each corner of the rooms and clean just one room.² But [laughs] we rather, you know, try to, you know, clean the one room completely with great difficulty [laughs]—with great effort. It looks like foolish, but someone must be foolish enough [laughing] to spend all life in cleaning each corner of the rooms. That is bodhisattva-mind. Do you understand, you know?

My teacher, Kishizawa-rōshi, always after clean—after we clean the room, he come and [Suzuki-rōshi gestures as if looking for dust³—*hmm!*⁴—laughter]. You know, the *shōji* screen has many, you know, frame, you know, and it is rather difficult to clean up each of the—each of the frame. So sometime we miss it. So he come [laughs]. He doesn't say anything [laughs]. *Ichigu wo terasu*,⁵ you know: "to shine the one corner of the room." In *Lotus Sūtra* also, there is a famous bodhisattva who used to bow to everyone he met— [laughs] everyone. He bowed to everyone. You may think that is very foolish [laughs], but that is bodhisattva-mind.

In Japan, there are some rascal. He—he—he himself was not so bad, but his wife was very bad person. She asked her husband always to do something bad. He married with her when she was the wife of—his master's wife, you know [laughs]. But he, for some reason, you know, he married with her. And after he got married with her, he felt so bad. And he went to a temple and asked that monk what to do. And he said it—it—it may be easier to commit *hara-kiri*, you know [laughs]. It is easier, actually, but if you die you cannot, you know, repay your sinful karma. You cannot change your karma, so it is better to live long enough to pay the bad karma.

² Possibly: "You may think it is better to clean two rooms than to clean just one room and its corners."

³ Note from original transcript.

⁴ As in "Aha!" [Kishizawa-rōshi exclaiming when he found evidence of dust.]

⁵ *Ichigu wo terasu*: "Light up (your) corner (of the world)." The fourth day of each month is observed by the Tendai school as *Ichigu wo terasu* day, during which cleaning, copying sūtras, giving alms, and other altruistic efforts are practiced.

So they started on trip. And wherever they go, his wife always asking [him] to do something bad. And at last, again, he killed someone to rob a traveler's money. And he made up his mind to give up, you know, to dismiss her. And he started to work on cave. Do you know the story?

In Kyūshū Island⁶ there is famous cave or tunnel for people. Each year some people was killed that pass because the road was so bad, and cliff was so steep. So he made up his mind to make a tunnel. But no one helped him, you know [laughs], because it looks like so silly, you know. It looks like almost impossible to make a tunnel for that mountain. But he made up his mind and completed the tunnel. That is the famous tunnel which was built by that monk.⁷ That is also, you know, bodhisattva-mind. Very foolish [laughs]—very crazy idea, you may say, but that is bodhisattva-mind.

They followed the good example of Shākyamuni Buddha: the many examples of bodhisattva way told by Buddha,⁸ sacrificing himself as a food of hungry tiger and just to know the one verse of the truth. This kind of spirit is bodhisattva-mind.

I think if you want to accomplish something in this land, you must have unusual mind to go beyond the usual way of life. And there you will have, you know, great mind, joyful mind, and true kind mind which is buddha-mind. So if you don't do anything, you don't have any mind. When you do it, then there you will have joy, and strength, and kindness.

So that is why it is necessary for us to have vow—bodhisattva's vow. And I think you must, you know, each one of you must have his own—your own vow—vow for only for yourself. My vow is, you know—[laughs] do you th- [partial word]—what do you think [laughs] my vow is? My vow is to scrape off the, you know, maybe [laughs]—the smoky pan [laughs]. You know, in the kitchen there are many black smoky pan. When I was young [laughs], there were—we did not use gas. We, you know, boiled things by wood. So bottom—pan is always—the bottom of the pan is always black and full of, you know, smuts. So it was very h- [partial word]—it is very difficult to boil something by it. So unless you take off those black smuts, you cannot boil anything.

⁶ One of the five principal islands of Japan.

⁷ The tunnel is called Ao-no-dōmon (Cave-gate of Ao, or Blue Cave Mouth), hewn with a hammer and chisel by the Zen monk Ryokai (d. 1774) and others from 1735 to 1750. The tunnel was popularized in Japan by the novel written by Kikuchi Kan, *Onshu no kanata ni* (*The Serene Realm beyond Love and Hate*). It was first published in 1921, so Suzuki-rōshi was probably familiar with it. It was republished in English as *Beyond the Pale of Vengeance* (Mt. Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press, 1998).

⁸ Probably referring to the *Jātaka* tales.

So Buddhism has a lot of smuts outside [laughs] of the pan, so it is difficult to boil anything. So first of all is necessary to, you know, take off those black smuts. That is my vow: to take off, you know, black smuts of the pan so that you can boil something by it. If you take turn, you know, and cook, you know, some lazy person will left the pan, you know, with smuts. And next morning [laughs], someone—someone must clean it, you know, or else the pan will have more smuts until [laughs] someone clean it up. Someone must do it. I think, you know, when they feel very bad—when someone feel very bad with boiling by—receiving the black pan for—for someone who—who was in turn yesterday. But I think—I feel some joy of cleaning it, and I—I have some joy of, you know, boiling it by cleaned up pan.

So each one of you must have some vow. Then you will find joyful mind, and big mind, and kind mind. You will be every kind to, you know—if you—only when you vow—when you clean it because of your vow, you will find you will be kind to everyone, instead of, you know, [being] angry at people. That is bodhisattva-mind.

Thank you very much.



Ao-no-dōmon

Source: City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997.
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